ECOLOGY

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# Ecology

Ecology (from Greek: οἶκος, "house", or "environment"; -λογία, "study of")[A] is the branch of biology[1] which studies the connections among organisms and their environment. Objects of study include interactions of creatures with each other and with abiotic components of their environment. Issues of interest include the biodiversity, distribution, biomass, and populations of organisms, as well as cooperation and competition within and between kinds.

## Heading 2

Ecosystems are dynamically interacting systems of organisms, the communities they make up, and the non-living works of their environment. Ecosystem processes, such as primary production, pedogenesis, nutrient cycling, and niche construction, regulate the flux of energy and matter through an atmosphere. These processes are sustained by organisms with specific life history traits. Biodiversity means the varieties of species, genes, and ecosystems, enhances certain ecosystem services.

# Biome

Main article: Biome

Biomes are larger units of organization that categorize regions of the Earth's ecosystems, mainly according to the structure and composition of vegetation.[42] There are different methods to define the continental boundaries of biomes dominated by different functional types of vegetative communities that are limited in distribution by climate, precipitation, weather and other environmental variables.

## Heading 2

Biomes include tropical rainforest, temperate broadleaf and mixed forest, temperate deciduous forest, taiga, tundra, hot desert, and polar desert.[43] Other researchers have recently categorized other biomes, such as the human and oceanic microbiomes. To a microbe, the human body is a habitat and a landscape.[44] Microbiomes were discovered largely through advances in molecular genetics, which have revealed a hidden richness of microbial diversity on the planet. The oceanic microbiome plays a significant role in the ecological biogeochemistry of the planet's oceans.[45]

# Biosphere

The largest scale of ecological organization is the biosphere: the total sum of ecosystems on the planet. Ecological relationships regulate the flux of energy, nutrients, and climate all the way up to the planetary scale. For example, the dynamic history of the planetary atmosphere's CO2 and O2 composition has been affected by the biogenic flux of gases coming from respiration and photosynthesis, with levels fluctuating over time in relation to the ecology and evolution of plants and animals.[46]

## Heading 2

Ecological theory has also been used to explain self-emergent regulatory phenomena at the planetary scale: for example, the Gaia hypothesis is an example of holism applied in ecological theory.[47] The Gaia hypothesis states that there is an emergent feedback loop generated by the metabolism of living organisms that maintains the core temperature of the Earth and atmospheric conditions within a narrow self-regulating range of tolerance.[48]

**Class Schedule**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LESSON** | | **TOPIC** | **ASSIGNMENT** | **Points** | | **DUE** |
| 1 | | What is Distance Learning? | Wiki #1 | 10 | | March 10 |
| Presentation | 20 | |  |
| 2 | History & Theories | | Brief Paper | 20 | | March 24 |
| Spring Break | | | | | | |
| 3 | | Distance Learnes | Ciscussion #1 | 10 | | April 7 |
| Group Project | 50 | | April 14 |
| 4 | | Media Selection | Blog #1 | 10 | April 21 | |

# Individual ecology

See also: Life history theory, Ecophysiology, and Metabolic theory of ecology

Understanding traits of individual organisms helps explain patterns and processes at other levels of organization including populations, communities, and ecosystems. Several areas of ecology of evolution that focus on such traits are life history theory, ecophysiology, metabolic theory of ecology, and Ethology. Examples of such traits include features of an organisms life cycle such as age to maturity, life span, or metabolic costs of reproduction. Other traits may be related to structure, such as the spines of a cactus or dorsal spines of a bluegill sunfish, or behaviors such as courtship displays or pair bonding. Other traits include emergent properties that are the result at least in part of interactions with the surrounding environment such as growth rate, resource uptake rate, winter, and deciduous vs. drought deciduous trees and shrubs.One set of characteristics relate to body size and temperature.

## Heading 2

The metabolic theory of ecology provides a predictive qualitative set of relationships between an organism’s body size and temperature and metabolic processes. In general, smaller, warmer organisms have higher metabolic rates and this results in a variety of predictions regarding individual somatic growth rates, reproduction and population growth rates, population size, and resource uptake rates.The traits of organisms are subject to change through acclimation, development, and evolution. For this reason, individuals form a shared focus for ecology and for evolutionary ecology.

# Biodiversity

Main article: Biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life and its processes. It includes the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them, the communities and ecosystems in which they occur, and the ecological and evolutionary processes that keep them functioning, yet ever changing and adapting.

Noss & Carpenter (1994)[11]:5

Biodiversity (an abbreviation of "biological diversity") describes the diversity of life from genes to ecosystems and spans every level of biological organization. The term has several interpretations, and there are many ways to index, measure, characterize, and represent its complex organization.[12][13][14] Biodiversity includes species diversity, ecosystem diversity, and genetic diversity and scientists are interested in the way that this diversity affects the complex ecological processes operating at and among these respective levels.[13][15][16] Biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystem services which by definition maintain and improve human quality of life.

## Heading 2

[14][17][18] Conservation priorities and management techniques require different approaches and considerations to address the full ecological scope of biodiversity. Natural capital that supports populations is critical for maintaining ecosystem services[19][20] and species migration (e.g., riverine fish runs and avian insect control) has been implicated as one mechanism by which those service losses are experienced.[21] An understanding of biodiversity has practical applications for species and ecosystem-level conservation planners as they make management recommendations to consulting firms, governments, and industry.[22]

# Η ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ ΜΟΥ